

Approved MINUTES

Town of Concord
Estabrook Access Study Committee
Meeting
September 15, 2016
141 Keyes Road

Members Present: Sally Schnitzer
Polly Reeve
Neil Rasmussen
Peter Siebert
Kathryn Angell
Bonnie Pohlig
Justin King
Jeff Adams
Lisa Pohl

Also Present: Jane Hotchkiss, Select Board liaison

Public Present: David Santomena, Trustees of Reservations
Peter Gifford, Monument Street.

Sally Schnitzer called the meeting to order at 7:00 AM.

1. **Review and approval of minutes for the September 1 meeting**

The minutes from the Committee's meeting of September 1 were discussed. Bonnie Pohlig suggested two changes. It was moved and seconded that the minutes be approved as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

2. **Correspondence**

Several pieces of correspondence had been received and distributed to the members of the committee in advance of the meeting. A letter received from Lyn Lemaire, Chair of Carlisle's Conservation Restriction Advisory Committee generated some discussion. Neil commented that it was helpful to be reminded that Harvard's interest in the Woods had to do with research and education, and that they reserved the right to disengage from their commitments if these purposes were no longer being met. Kathy Angell offered her opinion that it would be extremely difficult for Harvard to get out of their obligations. Sally Schnitzer commented that it was important to make the public aware of the nature of ownership in the Woods, and that the letter from Ms. Lemaire was a helpful reminder, and reinforced the message that we have been working hard to share with the public throughout this process.

3. **Administrative matters**

Sally told the committee that we were considering Monday, October 24, for the Public Hearing in the Town House hearing room. She asked if the committee felt we would be ready for this hearing.

We agreed to see how far we got in this meeting and reassess at the end. Meanwhile, Jane Hotchkiss will discuss with the Select Board extending this committee's charge in order to allow for the completion of our report later than originally planned.

4. **Moving toward recommendations**

Prior to the meeting, Sally had distributed a rough draft of a document which will become the basis for our report. The committee felt it was a very helpful start, and offered various suggestions for expanding the document and making it more complete. Starting with the **opening section**:

- Add a section for "current issues" – what were the problems that led to the creation of this committee?
- Add a section describing the process that we have taken
- Emphasize the ecological and habitat value of the woods; that it is a large relatively undisturbed natural area, right up front in the document
- The first section might be stronger reordered and expanded somewhat:
 - Background and context
 - Committee charge
 - Guiding Principals
 - Important Understandings
- We should plan on also writing an executive summary
- We should make sure to document the ideas that we considered and decided were not needed at this point, but might be in the future if the steps we recommend are not sufficient or are no longer effective.

There was a discussion about whether we should distinguish between rights granted to Concord residents and those granted to the public at large. Strong feelings on both sides of the issue were expressed, but finally there was an agreement that at this point we would not recommend limiting access to Concord residents, but that we would document that we had discussed this step and decided against it at this time.

We discussed the draft **General Recommendations for Outreach and Education** and suggestions were made:

- Replace the reference to "Common Landowner Rules" with "Use Guidelines"
- In #2, edit to read: "the town of Concord **and its departments** work generally **and collaboratively...**"
- Include a recommendation pertaining to landowner education, especially as new landowners move in. This should be framed as a partnership and collaboration with landowners.

Welcome/Use Guidelines: Included in the draft was the proposed sign previously distributed, with suggested changes noted. Kathy Angell offered a modified version, entitled "Estabrook Woods Use Guidelines." There was some discussion of how to limit negative dog impacts. Kathy's proposed sign includes a prohibition on "commercial activities" which would preclude commercial dog walking, but there was an acknowledgement that this is difficult to enforce. For the time being, we will keep the maximum number of dogs per person at two in our recommendation. We will note

that more restrictive options to consider in the future if necessary would be requiring dogs to be leashed, reducing the number per person allowed, or prohibiting them altogether.

We discussed the need for kiosks that hold a variety of information vs. succinct signage that does not demand close reading. Because each access point is unique, we will make specific recommendations for each. There is a general interest in reducing “sign pollution” as much as possible while communicating essential information effectively.

We discussed the section titled “**How Much Parking and Where?**” and the following recommendations were made:

- In the opening paragraph, note that we focused on access points in Concord, with a general description of the nature of parking in Carlisle. Peter Seibert offered to write the section about Carlisle, with Nick d’Arbeloff.
- Change “parking ban” to “parking restrictions” in all cases.
- Note that the various access points provide experiences in different terrains and habitats, varied trail qualities, and access to features such as ponds.
- Note that potential parking is not always designated as such.
- Replace the sentence that begins “Committee has wrestled...” with our specific recommendations related to parking capacity by entrance.
- Add a note that Punkatasset, Chamberlin Woods, and Monument Farm all provide direct access to public or land trust land; Estabrook Road is unique because it provides access to privately owned land.
- Peter suggested that the report should acknowledge that we will not have the same numbers of potential parking spaces on Estabrook Road as in the past, but that we have tried to provide adequate and appropriate access at other places around the Woods.
- The Parking Subcommittee will assess the potential for additional parking spaces further south on Estabrook Road, beyond the barn.
- We are agreed that the issue of access, as distinct from parking, is our highest concern on Estabrook Road, but we can nonetheless make recommendations pertaining to parking as negotiations with landowners proceed.

The “**Dogs**” section was blank in the draft we reviewed, and the following suggestions were offered:

- Start by stating issues/problems with dogs
- Document the interventions we have considered, such as requiring leashing, improving fencing, etc.
- Issue of waste: Neil noted that while compliance with leashing expectations have improved significantly, the problem of waste remains unchanged. Justin King believes that the community of dog owners will self-police as they do in other places in town, once the expectations are uniform and people are educated.

We had a discussion of fencing and the subtle message even low fencing can give about staying on the path. Kathy suggested fencing might be useful at critical points where people tend to wander off.

Individual Access Points: Chamberlin Woods

- Add a note about controlling poison ivy, which is prolific in the field on Lowell Road. Controlling it more effectively would enhance this access point considerably.
- We discussed the fact that there is no nearby turnaround, and whether an instructive sign would help. The consensus was that people should be able to figure this out for themselves.

Individual Access Points: Punkatasset

- Identify the TTOR land as “donated by the Apthorp family”
- Refer to **ten** usable, informal parking spots – the number the parking subcommittee has identified.
- Move footnote #7 to the body of the text, and add a comment about the process used to quantify the practical number of spaces.
- Add a bullet point to highlight the difficulty in turning around on Monument Street.
- Note that the shoulder is variable in width.
- There were questions about TTOR’s process regarding the Apthorp land – David Santomenna responded that they are waiting for the report of this committee before moving forward.
- David Santomenna indicated that grass parking lots are unworkable.
- Remove the word “small” in describing our recommended parking lot; instead state the number of spots we recommend.
- Sally asked the committee to get more specific: how many parking spots? Where?
 - Prefer Apthorp land location
 - 20-24 spots in a low-impact, thoughtfully design lot. David Santomenna indicated that the Trustees would consider no more than 24 spaces on this land.
 - Remove all on-street parking
 - Acknowledge that we are recommending a net increase in parking in the area, and that this compensates for a reduction in parking on Estabrook Road and is appropriate since Punkattaset is town land.
 - Would a bike rack be useful?

Hearing and Report schedule

The committee agreed to work towards the October 24 hearing date.

Citizen Comments

Peter Gifford asked about the process once we deliver our recommendations to the town and was curious about who would pay for the construction and maintenance of the proposed parking area near Punkatasset. Sally responded that there will be a public process ahead, involving all the necessary permits and approvals for any infrastructural changes. Our committee is not in a position to negotiate; that will be between the town and the Trustees. Kathy Angell added that we should address these questions in our report, and suggest possible sources of support such as the Community Preservation Act or a Friends group.

Peter mows the TTOR Apthorp Land and shared that the accumulation of dog waste is a serious problem there. He is concerned about how to control the negative impacts of public use of private land, and is concerned that it is going to be overused and there will be conflicts in the future. He told the committee that he and his father each gave land to the Land Trust and that he worries that future landowners will be unwilling to consider land donations if these concerns are not resolved.

He suggested that one system for controlling commercial dog walkers would be for them to be required to purchase and renew an annual license and wear their credentials on a lanyard around their necks while walking dogs.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM.

Documents reviewed at meeting:

Letter from Lyn Lemaire, Chair of Carlisle Conservation Restriction Advisory Committee

Correspondence received since last meeting

Proposed Estabrook Woods Use Guidelines + Welcome Sign submitted by Kathy Angell

Draft Preliminary Outline and Recommendations submitted by Sally Schnitzer